

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR

SUBJ: BOARD FOR INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING:

RE RETRANSMISSION FACILITIES IN PORTUGAL

REF: LISBON 3405

SUMMARY: WORKERS' COMMISSION AT RARET RETRANSMISSION FACILITY DEMAND HOUSECLEANING OF PORTUGUESE DIRECTORS AND EXCESSIVE SEVERANCE PAY BENEFITS. MANAGER ASKING BOARD TO RESIGN AND CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES IF UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT REGARDING SEVERANCE PAY AND COMING WAGE DEMANDS. END SUMMARY

1. OVER PAST WEEK, ARTICLES IN LISBON PRESS INSTIGATED BY WORKERS COMMISSION AT RARET HAVE LISTED DEMANDS INCLUDING (A) THE FIRING (SANEAMENTO) OF PORTUGUESE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS THEY CONSIDER "COMPRO-MISED BY THE FASCIST REGIME", AND (B) SEVERANCE PAY OF FOUR MONTH'S SALARY FOR EACH YEAR WORKED AT RARET. MR. HARRY BLACK, LOCAL RARET MANAGER, TOLD EMBOFF LETTERS HAVE GONE OUT TO PORTUGUESE BOARD MEMBERS ASKING THEM FOR THEIR RESIGNATIONS, THUS MEETING THE COMMISSION DEMAND, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, COMPLYING WITH THE REQUEST BY INFORMATION MINISTER, SANCHES OSORIO, REPORTED REFTEL.
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BLACK SAID HE DOES NOT EXPECT ANY DIFFICULTY WITH BOARD

MEMBERS RESIGNATION.

2. UP TO NOW THE COMMISSION HAS CONCENTRATED ON ISSUE OF PORTUGUESE BOARD MEMBERS AND ISSUE OF SEVERANC PAY. THE LIBERAL SEVERANCE PAY REQUESTED BY THE COMMISSION ALLEGEDLY IS BASED ON PRECARIOUSNESS OF RARET'S FUTURE BECAUSE IT IS DEPENDENT ON YEARLY U.S. GOV'T APPROPRIATION. THE WORKERS WANT COMPENSATION FAR ABOVE THAT STIPULATED ACCORDING TO PORTUGUESE LAW (APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH'S SALARY FOR EVERY YEAR WORKED,) TO COMPENSATE THEM FOR THIS "UNCERTAINTY." BLACK SAYS THAT RFE'S NEW YORK DIRECTORS ARE UNLIKELY TO AGREE TO BENEFITS MORE LIBERAL THAN THOSE ENJOYED BY GERMAN WORKERS AT MUNICH. GERMAN SEVERANCE PAY BENEFITS WERE DESCRIBED AS ABOUT THE SAME AS PRESENT PORTUGUESE LAW AFFORDS.

3. BLACK SAID NEGOTIATIONS WITH COMMISSION ARE MADE DIFFICULT BECAUSE 18 SEPARATE SYNDICATES REPRESENT GROUPS AS DIVERSE AS OFFICE WORKERS, SHEET METAL PEOPLE, AND ELECTRICIANS. SOME SYNDICATES ARE FROM THE SANTAREM AREA AND OTHERS FROM LISBON. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PORTUGUESE EMPLOYEES OF RARET AT THE PRESENT TIME, ACCORDING TO BLACK, IS 280.

4. THE COMMISSION IS NOW DRAWING UP ITS WAGE DEMANDS. BLACK RECOGNIZES THAT RARET PAYS LESS THAN THE PREVAILING RATES IN PORTUGAL TODAY; YET A HUGE INCREASE MIGHT DRIVE RFE TO CONSIDER CLOSING RARET IN FAVOR OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES SUCH AS RENTING TIME ON BBC OR USING A BARCELONA TRANSMITTER.

COMMENT: THE PUSH AND PULL OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH A MILITANT SYNDICATE IS NOT EXACTLY WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED FOR HARRY BLACK, A MAN RECOVERING FROM A RECENT HEART ATTACK. HE ADMITS LOSING SLEEP AS THE SYNDICATE INCREASES THE PRESSURE THROUGH THE PRESS. IT IS NOT CLEAR JUST HOW FAR RFE WILL YIELD IN THE WAGE AND SEVERANCE PAY NEGOTIATIONS, AND HOW SERIOUS THEY ARE ABOUT OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO RARET, BUT ON THIS IS CERTAIN. THE DAYS OF A PEACEFUL RETRANSMISSION FACILITY IN PORTUGAL VIRTUALLY WITHOUT PROBLEMS ARE OVER.
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